

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

Claims 1-11 (Cancelled)

Claim 12. (Currently Amended): A mineral wool plant substrate comprising a coherent matrix of mineral wool and a quantity and up to 20 volume % of an ion-exchange agent comprising an ion-exchange capacity of at least about 15 meq/100g dry weight, wherein the ion-exchange agent is present in a maximum amount of 20 volume % and has a stable structure, exhibiting a non-clay like behavior with respect to swelling and shrinking.

Claim 13. (Previously Presented): The substrate according to claim 12, wherein the ion-exchange agent is a cation-exchange agent.

Claim 14. (Previously Presented): The substrate according to claim 12, wherein the ion-exchange agent comprises soil minerals.

Claim 15. (Currently Amended): The substrate according to claim 12, wherein the ion-exchange agent has a non-clay like behavior ~~behaviour~~ with respect to swelling and shrinking ~~shrinkage~~.

Claim 16. (Currently Amended): The substrate according to claim 12, wherein the ion-exchange agent has an average pore size of less than 25  $\mu\text{m}$  ~~smaller than the average pore size of mineral wool having a density of less than about 72 kg/m<sup>3</sup>~~.

Claim 17. (Previously Presented): The substrate according to claim 12, wherein the ion-exchange agent comprises a zeolite.

Claim 18. (Currently Amended): The substrate according to claim 12, further comprising an organic substance selected from the group consisting of sphagnum and peat, wherein the organic substance substitutes ~~, substituting~~ the mineral wool for up to 20 volume %.

Claim 19. (Previously Presented): The substrate according to claim 12, further comprising clay, substituting the mineral wool for up to about 20 volume %.

Claim 20. (Previously Presented): The substrate according to claim 12, for use as a growing block.

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Claim 21. (Previously Presented): A growing mat comprising the substrate of claim 12.

Claim 22. (Previously Presented): A substrate comprising a coherent matrix of mineral wool, a pre-determined amount of clay and a pre-determined amount of an organic substance, substituting the mineral wool for up to 20 volume %.

Claim 23. (Previously Presented): The substrate according to claim 22, wherein the organic substance is selected from the group consisting of sphagnum and peat.

Claim 24. (Previously Presented): The substrate according to claim 15, wherein the ion-exchange agent has a stable zeolite, cage-like structure.

Claim 25. (Previously Presented): The substrate according to claim 12, wherein the ion-exchange agent has an ion-exchange capacity of about 30 meq/100g dry weight.

Claim 26. (Previously Presented): The substrate according to claim 12, wherein the ion-exchange agent has an ion-exchange capacity of about 40 meq/100g dry weight.

Claim 27. (Previously Presented): The substrate according to claim 18, wherein the organic substance is selected from the group consisting of sphagnum and peat.

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